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Gentle Giant: A clanking albatross of sophomoric concepts.

Hardy fans brave the elements

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ for The Gazette

Although the Gentle Giant show on Saturday night at the Autostade was plagued by postponement, a province-wide power failure, rain, cold, and a transit strike, at least 5,000 hardy fans turned up to savour the group's classically bent rock music.

The quintet is one of those British groups to have been discovered by the Quebecois rock fans years ahead of anywhere else.

Commented singer Derek Shulman: "Montreal's really one of the most sophisticated rock audiences in the world. most groups will tell you that. They know when you're good, and they pay our music on the radio. In England there's only one pop radio network, where the music is geared to teeyear-olds."

Gentle Giant features a highly structured, intense approach to composition, which they play out with a total of 12 instruments on stage. They've remained faithful to their tight-webbed sound and it has taken Gentle Giant five trips to America to at last headline.

Their recent album, Free Hand, is described by Shulman as having "more feel to it. We walked into the studio with set arrangements but if it didn't come across in two or three takes we'd rarely go further.

The members of the group approach their music with prodigious memory; the winding compositions emerge emotion in music museums. At times keyboardist Kerry Minnear and drummer John Weathers flush surges of inspiration.

But most of the time, Gentle Giant's music is mechanical, a clanking albatross of sophomoric concepts.

Lacombe Lucien star dies

MONTAUBAN, France — (UPI) — Actor Pierre Blaise, who starred in one of France's most recent controversial movies, Lacombe, Lucien, died Sunday evening in a car accident, police said.

Police said Blaise's car veered off a country road near Moissac in the south of France and struck a row of trees.

Anything that's natural goes into Weather Report's brilliant sound

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ for The Gazette

Weather Report, the quartet that played with Gentle Giant at the Autostade on Saturday night, produces as brilliant a confusion of sounds as can be heard from a small group today.

The sounds are: Deep, thick electronically synthesized chords and incandescent piano clusters, clear, fine-edged, haunting soprano saxophone lines; percussions and hand instruments that remind you of tropical jungles and third world marketplaces; lightning-quick bobbing electric bass rhythms; and drums that roll and slosh.

The sounds are spontaneous and colorful, yet refined and with a sense of order. Little wonder that Weather Report has won many jazz polls as the top group in recent years, but this is more than a best-shot group of stylists.

The group was founded six years ago by Austrian-born keyboardist Joseph Zawinul and American saxophonist Wayne Shorter. Zawinul had played piano for nine years with the late Cannonball Adderly group, and his composition, In A Silent Way, was recorded by Miles Davis in 1969 and can be considered a starting point for "electric jazz."

Meanwhile, Shorter has garnered a deserved reputation as the most serious post-John Coltrane soprano sax player. The combination of styles has served as Weather Report's constant standard, despite various personnel changes.

TOGETHER

"This is what holds it together," said Zawinul, whose accent is a blend of the Alps and Malibu. "The freshness of everything, and the way the chemistry forms. Different things happen at different times, you've got to approach it from a completely natural standpoint. All the bands we've had have had a certain magic. I couldn't copy myself, and neither could anyone else in the band."

Drummer Chester Thompson left Frank Zappa's band to join Weather Report, and he says the differences in playing for each highly-acclaimed group are like the differences in the music.

"Frank's music is tightly arranged. This music is space, just stretched out — every song is played differently every night. With Frank you made sure to play it the same each time. Sometimes it felt better than at others. Here, what you play depends completely upon how everybody else is playing."

SPICED

Their sound is spiced by the silvery exotic array of instruments surrounding the ebullient Brazilian percussionist Alyrio Lima, who is prone to eating a plate of boiled spinach and cauliflower for dinner and sports a lady-killer smile. When you ask him where he's been, he says "Everywhere."

"Everything is an instrument," says Lima. "With this band I can use a lotta things. You can be bone, you can do a lot."

Zawinul pointed with pride to the progress of bassist Al Johnson, whose pulsating rhythms have injected great movement to Weather Report's sound. He said, "Wayne and I have certain arrangements for the band, because you've got to have it together. But, often, if the band plays it and someone comes up with some hipper stuff, then it is changed. It differs all the time."

Weather Report's Joseph Zawinul: A blend of Alps and Malibu.

Harry Kahanek

Endless summer comes to Forum as Beach Boys concert cheered

By DOUG PRINGLE for The Gazette

Montreal will be lucky to see a finer concert this year than that of the Beach Boys at the Forum Sunday night.

In the early 60s, the Beach Boys reflected and projected a lifestyle of endless summer, sand, sun, hot rods, surfing and romance.

However, with the arrival of acid rock and "reality" in the later 60s, all that kid stuff was rejected as rock fans got down to the serious business of living. The Beach Boys were ignored although they continued to make excellent music.

NEW GENERATION

Now, in the mid-70s, when positive energy is needed more than ever, a whole new generation has turned on to the Beach Boys. In fact, their early material, having been recently re-released, is selling better than when they were at their peak.

So it was not surprising to see two distinct generations of fans in the 18,000 standing-room-only crowd.

Sloop John B got the show off to a great start, but it was Help Me Rhonda that had the crowd on their feet and dancing. It was to remain that way — except for a couple of songs from the Holland album — that had the crowd waiting politely for the show to begin again.

Seldom has the energy of a Forum crowd been maintained at such a high level for so long. One high-energy hit followed another as the crowd reacted more and more ecstatically.

IMPERFECT

Musically, the band, which included five additional musicians, was not as together as it might have been, and there were times when the famous Beach Boys harmonies were far from perfect. But I'm sure no one there cared. For a Beach Boys concert is good vibrations all the way.

If there was a high point it was the string of California Girls, Wouldn't It Be Nice, and Good Vibrations that closed the show. The crowd, however, wouldn't let them go, and they came back for a three song encore, including Surfin' U.S.A. That still wasn't enough for the ecstatic crowd. And they came back one more time for Fun Fun Fun.

The Beach Boys' Carl Wilson: Selling better than ever.

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